A Legacy of Heart

When Trent Baker took a part-time job as a debt collector, he discovered how fortunate he was to have the opportunity to pursue a college education. His job required him to drive around various areas of Columbus and go door-to-door to collect bill payments. The experience increased his awareness of the challenging economic conditions that affected families so close to home.

Trent’s time as a bill collector inspired him to help others by creating a scholarship for students who may not otherwise have an option to attend college. “When our parents, Donny and Jeanne, died unexpectedly, my brother, Todd, and I wanted to do something significant to honor their memory,” he said. “Since they always placed a strong emphasis on education, we knew a scholarship fund would be the ultimate tribute.”

The Baker Memorial Scholarship, housed in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, gives priority to students in Columbus City Schools and preference to graduates of the Urban Concern and Upward Bound programs. Urban Concern opened Harambee Christian School in the South Linden neighborhood of Columbus in 1998 to provide a high-quality private education for at-risk students, most of whom live close to the school. Since 1965, Ohio State’s Upward Bound Program has been instrumental in helping high school students in the Columbus City Schools achieve their goals by instilling and fostering their skills, talents and motivation to graduate from high school and go on to complete their post-secondary education.

A third-generation Buckeye, Trent received several scholarships and is truly grateful for the memories he created while at Ohio State. Some of his favorites include attending the 1980 Rose Bowl and camping overnight for tickets to basketball games. Since graduating in 1983, he’s maintained a loyal relationship with the university as a member of The Ohio State University Alumni Association and President’s Club donor.

“I hope the students who receive the scholarships succeed in life, achieve economically and pay forward the gift,” Trent said.

Trent credits his Ohio State education with opening doors to a thriving career in financial services. He currently works as a financial adviser with Morgan Stanley, a position he describes as a perfect fit. “I take great pride in helping people achieve their goals by taking the mystery out of intimidating financial topics,” he said.

Trent and his late brother, Todd, who earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration in 1991, shared a passion for Ohio State sports that became a significant part of their lives. Todd served as a senior project manager for Abbott Labs for more than 27 years. When he passed away suddenly in 2012 from an undetected heart condition known as hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, Trent added his brother’s name to the scholarship they had created.

A legacy of helping others succeed is how Trent wants his family to be remembered. When he and his wife, Beverly, were considering their will and determining the best approach for their assets, Ohio State ranked high on the list. “But for Ohio State, there would be a large void in my life. I would not have nearly the opportunities I have been offered,” he said.
“We are so grateful to the Bakers for making Ohio State the beneficiary of their generous, seven-figure trust. This is the largest gift the Office of Diversity and Inclusion has received, and we are extremely pleased that it will support scholarships for some of the best and brightest students right here in Columbus who dream of attending Ohio State.” – Valerie Lee, vice president, Office of Outreach and Engagement, and vice provost, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, and chief diversity officer